

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

HA-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DOE-15 SOE-02 SY-05 A-01

OPR-02 OC-06 CCO-00 /101 W

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FM AMCONSUL KADUNA

TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL IBADAN PRIORITY

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3969

C O N F I D E N T I A L KADUNA 0501

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, NI

SUBJECT: SHARIA CONTROVERSY

REF: LAGOS 4919, KADUNA 0500

1. PO TOUCHED BASE LAST EVENING WITH KADUNA STATE COMMISSIONER FOR ESTABLISHMENTS, CHAIRMAN KADUNALOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL AND WAZIRI OF KATSINA. THEIR REACTIONS TO LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ON SHARIA WERE GENERALLY ALIKE. WAZIRI, WHO SAID HE HAD TALKED TO ONE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY MEMBER EARLIER IN DAY, CLAIMED THAT NORTHERN MEMBERS HAD ALREADY DECIDED TO RETURN TO ASSEMBLY "SHORTLY" BUT WERE NOT YET READY TO ANNOUNCE DECISION. WHEN I FLOATED THIS WITH OTHER TWO IN LATER SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS, THEY EXPRESSED SCEPTICISM THAT NORTHERN RETURN WAS SO IMMINENT. ALL TOOK NEUTRAL ATTITUDE TOWARD OBASANJO'S STATEMENT TO CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. WHEN QUEIRED ON WHY NORTH HAD ESCALATED SITUATION THIS WEEK, ALL LAID STRESS ON NORTHERN DISSATISFACTION/ ANGER AT CA CHAIRMAN UDUMA'S DISMISSAL OF SHARIA CONTROVERSY/ NORTHERN WALKOUT AS "MINOR AFFAIR."

2. ON RUMORS OF COMMUNAL RIOTS (MOSLEM VS. CHRISTIAN),
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ALL ADMITTED HAVING HEARD OF POSSIBILITY OF DISTURBANCES BUT SAID THEY BELIEVED COOLER HEADS WOULD PREVAIL. (APPARENTLY SULTAN OF SOKOTO MADE RADIO STATEMENT IN HAUSA YESTERDAY WHICH, AS REPORTED TO PO, APPEALED FOR CALM BUT ALSO INDICATED THAT SHARIA ISSUE WAS STILL OPEN.) IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH AMCIT WIFE OF NIGERIAN ARMY OFFICER, SHE TOLD PO THAT RUMORS OF PLANS FOR DISTURBANCES

WERE RIFE AND THAT SHE KNEW PERSONALLY OF ONE SOUTHERN FAMILY (AND HAD HAD SECOND-HAND REPORTS OF SEVERAL OTHERS) WHICH WITHIN PAST FEW DAYS, HAD PACKED UP AND MOVED SOUTH BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE COMMUNAL VIOLENCE.

3. IN ANOTHER CONVERSATION WITH ANTI-SHARIA YORUBA FIELD GRADE ARMY OFFICER WHO BASED IN ENUGU, PO WAS TOLD THAT CONSTITUTION AND ASSEMBLY WERE "FINISHED" BECAUSE ATMOSPHERE OF DISTRUST AT ASSEMBLY WOULD EFFECTIVELY PREVENT ANY FURTHER PROGRESS. IN HIS VIEW, PROSPECTS FOR RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE IN 79 WERE NOW EXCEEDINGLY SLIM BECAUSE OF EVENTS OF PAST TWO WEEKS. OFFICER INCIDENTALLY IS NOT FOR RETENTION OF POWER BY MILITARY, HE IS DOCTOR WHO NOW AWAITING NECESSARY ARMY COUNCIL APPROVAL OF HIS RETIREMENT PAPERS.

4. COMMENT: IF COMMUNAL DISTRUBANCES BREAK OUT IN ONE NORTHERN CAPITAL, BELIEVE THEY WILL SPREAD - WITH INCALCULABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR NIGERIAN UNITY. GIVEN WHAT APPEARS TO BE INCREASING NORTHERN ANGER AT DISDAIN WITH WHICH SHARIA ISSUE HAS BEEN TREATED BY CHRISTIANS AT CA, THERE IS CERTAINLY FAIR CHANCE FOR VIOLENCE PARTICULARLY GIVEN TRADITIONAL NORTHERN DISLIKE OF YORUBAS AND PROBABLY AMBIVALENT ATTITUDE OF TRADITIONAL AND OTHER LEADERS HERE.
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